



MIDLANDS

# 101 Top Tips for Expeditions



# Foreword

**This booklet of 101 top expedition tips has been compiled by Dawn Scott at The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in the Midlands Regional Office.**

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# Expedition training skills

## Top Tip 1

You can never teach camp craft skills too many times! Remember to record who you have taught and when so you can prove that they have been taught it.

## Top Tip 2

### Teaching camp craft skills

This is an assault course challenge in teams which runs like a primary school sports day event! The team to complete the challenges first wins and they include things like each putting on a set of full waterproofs and boots, crossing a 'bog' using stepping stones as a team (no feet on the floor), putting a tent up and finally finding the grid reference for their current location on a local map.

To expand the challenge, add in extra activities like making a cup of tea on the camping stove etc.

## Top Tip 3

For food and cooking we have a 'ready steady cook' challenge. We provide a pot luck selection of ingredients (lots of cans with no labels!) including a carbohydrate (pasta, rice etc.) protein (cheese, cooked meat etc.) a sauce, cake or biscuits, a can of fruit and custard/rice pudding or similar and finally chocolate. And in a master chef style way each team has to produce a two or three course meal cooked safely on a stove from the ingredients provided. Leaders can choose if they want to be the taste testers!

## Top Tip 4

A variation on the above is doing a second challenge with weighing scales and challenging them to produce the best full meal they can from the lightest ingredients possible. The winning team has the lowest mass of ingredients, and it has to be edible!

## Top Tip 5

Make a giant picture of a rucksack and pictures of all the usual contents and students have to 'pin the correct item on the rucksack'. It promotes discussion of what to put where and why.

You can also take pictures of 'rogue' items such as hair straighteners etc, to generate discussion about what items should be left behind.

## Top Tip 6

Organise a grid reference challenge after you have taught map reading skills. Take a map of your local school site or meeting area and place Tupperware boxes at specific grid references containing clues to a puzzle and letters for an anagram. First team back with the correct answer wins.

## Top Tip 7

### Alphabet cardinal points

This is great for teaching the four basic cardinal points and half cardinal points. Work out the directions to draw each of the letters of the alphabet. For example the letter L is 2 units South and 1 unit East, the letter P is 2 units North, 1 East, 1 South, 1 West. Then make words up and get the participants to work out the letters. For small scale, use squared paper and a pencil, on a grand scale, use tent pegs and a ball of string.

Example: HELP is 2S,1N,1E,1N,2S space 1W,2S,1E,1W,1N,1E space 2S,1E space 2N,1E,1S,1W

## Top Tip 8

Mark out eight cardinal points on separate pieces of card, with a set for each team, put these at one end of the room and then run a relay race to see which team can complete their compass first.

When this is achieved, add in the next eight divisions such as: SSE, NNW.

## Top Tip 9

### Interpreting the map

You need to enlarge each of four or more 1K map squares, that border each other, to approx. 20 x 20 cm each (the size doesn't matter much, but colour does), leaving some of the bordering squares visible. Enlarge the squares by the same ratio. You could laminate the map squares so they can be used again.

You need to bring:

- some scissors
- some cloths, tea-towels, old material, ideally green (the terrain). You could cut squares of approx. 90 x 90 cm in advance.
- blue ribbon / thick string (streams & rivers) and blue felt/ material for ponds and lakes if appropriate
- yellow or brown ribbon (lanes and roads)
- pieces of green sponges (trees / woodland / coppices etc)
- and the best part: dolly mixture sweets for the farms and houses.

The participants, in small groups, are asked to re-create one of the squares with the help of cups, plates or whatever etc. to form the hills and valleys (under the cloth), using the other items to create the detail of streams, villages, a farm etc. You can also get them to position their '3D map' to the north, using a compass.

Don't tell the young people in advance that each of the squares are bordering the others. Once they have created and oriented the 3D squares, then move the maps on to the same table to join up, this forms a bigger map of four (or six or nine...) squares, with the sections of streams, roads, woodland etc. joining up (with a bit of luck!).

Don't bother with the dry-stone walls or fences though!

Good fun and the participants didn't need much of an explanation. Biggest problem: to stop them eating the dolly mixture sweets, leaving you without farms and houses...

## Top Tip 10

Use EX<sup>2</sup> for participants who miss a training session \*, this way they can catch up without you having to run another session for them.

## Top Tip 11

Hold a rucksack packing race to see who can get all of their kit packed the fastest and neatly. Then take the team on a story, that involves needing to stop for a drink, deal with a first aid incident, get out their survival bags, make a brew etc. At each part in the story the participants have to find the relevant kit in their rucksacks.

## Top Tip 12

Hold a fashion show with what the well dressed, and badly dressed DofE participant is wearing this year for their expedition.

## Top Tip 13

Download the free map symbols from the Ordnance Survey website [www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) and cut them up and laminate them. Then use them to play pairs matching games, or finding each of the card symbols on the map.

## Top Tip 14

To learn about relief and contours make 3D map models from corrugated cardboard, using a map as a guideline. Get teams to draw around each layer of the card as they cut it out to show how the contour lines would look on a map.

\* EX<sup>2</sup> is an Expedition training package which helps participants learn basic expedition skills.. It's available from our trading arm, ASL, [www.DofE.org/shop](http://www.DofE.org/shop)

## Top Tip 15

Another way of showing contours and relief is to get everyone to make a fist and then to draw around all the points of equal height around the knuckles. When they put their hand flat on the table you will be able to see the circles as if they were contours.

## Top Tip 16

Use a basic map of the training area, or room that you are in and then lay out a course on the floor. Participants have to walk the course keeping the map orientated at all times. This activity encourages them to turn the map in their hands to orientate it rather than turning their bodies.

## Top Tip 17

Have a tent pitching competition with prizes for speed and accuracy including the angle that pegs are in the ground at. BEWARE: this activity is tough on tents, use old ones if you can.



## Top Tip 18

If you have participants who need additional practise reading co-ordinates in the correct order, try this game. Select dice of two very different sizes, colours, or textures. Designate one dice for revealing the horizontal coordinate and the other for the vertical position. Have them call out the co-ordinate revealed by the throw.



## Top Tip 19

Design a series of Dingbats for the Countryside Code, or basic picture clues for participants to work out the meanings.

## Top Tip 20

To help young people understand the weather, acquire a series of weather forecasts from different sources for the same area for the same day.

Record the TV and radio forecasts, download the mountain forecasts from the Internet and get a general internet forecast as well as a copy out of a paper.

Ask the young people to compare the different forecasts, are they saying the same thing? which appears to be more detailed? etc.

Make sure they understand the terms used, 'high pressure' / 'low pressure' / wind directions and speeds and the impact that these might have on their expedition.

Get them then to present the weather forecast telling the audience how it will affect DofE teams out doing their expeditions.

## Top Tip 21

### Compass Scavenger Hunt

Materials: A compass per team, about ten cards per team, pegs.

What to Do: Prepare a simple orienteering course outdoors. Peg small cards to the ground.

Each card should have on it a bearing and distance to the next card

The card also contains a jumbled up word for the team to unscramble. The words in the sequence produce a message.

The first team to finish the orienteering trail and decode its message, wins.

Laminating the cards and then punching a hole with a hole punch will make the activity reusable in the future for other groups.

## Top Tip 22

### Find your bearings

In this game you'll be creating words using compass bearings.

Equipment: Each young person should have a pencil, paper and compass.

How to Play: Mark out a circle in a field and place stakes in the ground with a single, highly-visible letter on each stake. Each young person must spell out a word by finding its compass headings.

For example, if assigned the word 'SYMBOL', they would take a compass reading to the first letter ('S') from the centre stake. After marking the bearing down, the young person would walk to the 'S' and take a bearing to the next letter ('Y') and continue until finishing the word.

Leaders must check to make sure the bearings are correct. Depending on the size of the circle, you could have groups of young people all playing at once.

## Top Tip 23

Have a Trangia relay race, the first person has to assemble the Trangia correctly, the next person dismantle it, then the next one assemble it, and so on. First team to finish wins. Mix it up by asking the participants to answer a question on stove safety at the end of each leg as well.



## Top Tip 24

To help with menu planning, provide pictures of different types of food and get participants to assemble them on paper plates. The calorific value and the weight of the food can then be written on the paper plates.

## Top Tip 25

Run a word search looking for key mapping words or camping words, turn this into a competition for all of your centre. Have specific word searches for Bronze, Silver and Gold levels.

## Top Tip 26

Balance the Trangia handle on top of the lid when the stove is lit to show that it is in use (be aware that the bottom of the handle where it is in contact with the lid will get hot).

This activity encourages participants not to get too close to the Trangia in case they knock it over.

## Top Tip 27

Run a timed challenge to show how much quicker water boils with the lid on the pot.

## Top Tip 28

If you use meths, try experimenting with a Trangia by adding a little drop of water to the meths to avoid getting black soot on the pans, how much is needed to stop the soot blackening, at what point does it stop boiling effectively?

## Top Tip 29

Making your own expedition kit can be great fun as well as an activity for the Skills section. Fleece hats and mitts can be made along with stuff sacks, from material that is easily obtainable.

### **Top Tip 30**

Teach the importance of keeping a tent tidy with everything where you can find it.

### **Top Tip 31**

Make sure anyone wearing glasses has a hard case to put their glasses in at night and do you, or they, have a spare pair for them in case they get broken?

### **Top Tip 32**

Ask your local orienteering club if they could help your participants learn map reading. They might be able to arrange a couple of local competitions especially for your participants, or let them take part in local competitions.

### **Top Tip 33**

Break down all of the learning into small bite sized chunks with activities never lasting for more than about 20 minutes. Better to have lots of small activities than one large one.

### **Top Tip 34**

If you find it hard to get all of your participants together each week for training put the training on over a residential weekend and have them move around various activities throughout the day. This does really only work with motivated participants though that are able to take in lots of knowledge at once.

## Top Tip 35

All participants need to learn first aid for their expedition, why not make it easy and arrange for a qualified person to run a three month first aid course on a weekly basis so that participants can also complete their Bronze Skills section if they want. Regular weekly tuition is far better than a one off hit and participants are much more likely to take it in.

## Top Tip 36

Make sure that the participants first aid kits have a quick reference sheet in so that they can consult it if necessary.

## Top Tip 37

First aid is learnt through doing, not by watching so make sure that you include lots of scenarios into your first aid training. Giving participants scenarios when they are outside on training walks and their practice expedition will make them think about the difficulties of doing first aid in the open and in the wet.

## Top Tip 38

First Aid manikins are expensive so set up a co-operative with other schools or organisations so that you can buy them between you, as they will only be used on a couple of occasions each year.

## Top Tip 39

Many Guide or Scout units will have first aid manikins that can be borrowed at little cost for training purposes.

## Top Tip 40

Many young peoples' first aid kits are completely inadequate for what might be needed, it is essential that the team can deal with serious bleeding if it occurs. A few plasters are not enough.

## Top Tip 41

All of the participants should be carrying survival bags. These make great groundsheets for when they are cooking in camp, or for rucksack covers if bags have to be left outside the tent over night.

## Top Tip 42

Remember that participants are far more likely to have to deal with accidents to other people than to their own team. They should be well trained and competent to deal with any incidents.

## Top Tip 43

After the expedition make three piles of equipment:

- Essential equipment that must be taken e.g. waterproofs, first aid kit etc.
- A pile of all of the equipment that was used
- A pile of everything that was not used

Go through the unused kit and discuss whether it should have been taken and whether it needs to be taken next time.



# Practical navigational training outside



## Top Tip 44

### Understanding the map

Seat participants at tables with enough maps for everyone. Take the team on a journey with the participants following on the map.

Using grid references, map symbols and distances to give a journey, young people should follow on the map and be able to say what they can see at each point when the leg stops, with regards to features and terrain.

## Top Tip 45

Using the exercise above, plot your route on a version of electronic mapping and then fly through the route so that the teams can see how accurate their descriptions were to the terrain and landscape that they will see.

## Top Tip 46

Use the above exercise, this time as a risk assessment training exercise, with participants deciding what the hazards might be at each point in the journey. They can decide what they need to do about these hazards and whether they need any extra training.

## Top Tip 47

Use the above exercise again but this time ask the participants to design the journey for other participants to follow.

## Top Tip 48

To teach walking on a bearing and pacing in rough ground.

Split the young people into teams of six, with one leader to stand as the centre marker. Allow each young person to choose a bearing within a given range, so participant number one can choose any bearing between 0 and 60 degrees, participant two between 61 and 120 degrees etc.

Participants should then walk out on a paced distance of between 100 and 200 metres on their chosen bearing and put their rucksack down.

When they get back to the centre point they should give their distance and bearing to someone else who should go out to see if they can retrieve the rucksack. How close is the finder to the rucksack.

For open flat ground such as parks or playing fields drop golf balls instead of rucksacks.

## Top Tip 49

Get participants to visually estimate the distance to a point on their route, then get them to measure it on the map. Keep repeating the exercise and after a while they become quite accurate at estimating distances. It also makes them identify points on the map accurately so that they can measure between them.

## Top Tip 50

To help teach grid referencing squares, mark out a large 10 x 10 grid outside and then ask someone to call out the six figure grid reference, another player from the team must go and stand in the correct place in the grid square.

Then go backwards with someone standing in a square and the player calling out the grid reference of where they are.



# Expedition routes

## Top Tip 51

To teach walking on a bearing, get everyone to wear a baseball cap with cloth draped over the peak in order to blank out their forward vision.

Then get them to walk on their bearing for a set distance, say 100 paces and then get them to turn around and take a back bearing on their start point.

They will be astonished by how much they have wandered off their course. This teaches the importance of setting a point in front of you on your bearing and walking to the point rather than constantly trying to follow the bearing on the compass.

## Top Tip 52

On a training walk always tell a story, joke, or give some point of interest at the end of each leg so that when you are discussing the route afterwards with the participants you can refer back to it.

This way each leg of the journey becomes memorable and helps them to reflect on the training afterwards.

## Top Tip 53

Always get the team to estimate how long each leg should take them and then for them to check how long it actually took. By repeating this for each leg of the walk it will become instinctive for them to keep track of the length of the legs.

Most DofE teams get lost because they turn off tracks too early or forget how long they have been walking for and turn off too late.

## Top Tip 54

Help the teams make their routes interesting so that they have something to talk about.

## Top Tip 55

At Bronze levels, make sure routes are close to roads for easy escape routes. This makes supervision easier and enables teams to relocate themselves far sooner if they make a mistake.

## Top Tip 56

Avoid contrived routes that have loops or double backs in them, they discourage young people when they think they are close to the finish and then realise they still have a long way to go. Routes should always follow a logical path.

## Top Tip 57

Try and help the teams to plan routes that ensure that if they have to climb hills this is done at the beginning of the day and not near the end when they are tired.

## Top Tip 58

Mapping software is a great way of showing young people how their route may look on the ground, and many teams have made changes to their route when they see the elevation profiles of what they have planned.

It enables the team to visualise what they have planned and makes it far more real to them.



# Supervising teams

## Top Tip 59

Remember that footpaths that are clearly marked on the maps may be far less defined on the ground, make sure you have a knowledge of how clear the footpaths are in the area where the young people are travelling.

Warn the teams of what to do if the footpath doesn't appear to be on the ground. In some areas this may include finding a different route to avoid trespassing.

## Top Tip 60

At Bronze it can be very helpful to give participants a piece of string with knots in it at every 4cm (i.e. 1 km) and let them use it to roughly measure any routes that they are planning. This avoids them planning a route carefully and then measuring it to find that it is far too short or far too long.

## Top Tip 61

Remember if you have more than one team they should be walking different routes, otherwise they often just follow each other blindly.

## Top Tip 62

Remember to allow time for the exploring element of the expedition within their planned daily hours. Teams need to look at the map carefully to decide where they will carry out their exploring.

## Top Tip 63

Make sure you know where all the best tea shops are on the route.

## Top Tip 64

One good book is never enough, make sure you have plenty of reading material for those long waits.

## Top Tip 65

Carry some form of DofE ID with you for when farmers challenge you for hanging around for hours.

## Top Tip 66

Remember that you should only be having a positive impact on the communities that your young people are journeying through, make sure that the lasting impression of the DofE is a positive one.

## Top Tip 67

Mark the times that the teams are due at the end of each leg on the your map and then mark the actual times that they get there so you can follow their progress.

## Top Tip 68

If you have more than one team out at a time make sure that you mark each teams route up on your map in different colours so you can identify them at a glance.



## **Top Tip 69**

Make sure each member of the team has the Supervisor's and Assessor's numbers written down on a card somewhere as well as having it programmed into their mobiles (if carried) in case the mobile batteries die.

## **Top Tip 70**

Label every bit of kit including tent poles so that at the end of the expedition you can easily return everything in the right bags back to the stores.

## **Top Tip 71**

Keep black bin liners for the end of the expedition for wet kit to be dumped into when it is given back to you. (Unless the participants are taking it home to dry).

## **Top Tip 72**

A good pair of binoculars will help you identify teams from afar.

## **Top Tip 73**

Note down what colour waterproofs your team has so that you can identify them from a distance in the rain. All participants look the same with waterproofs on!

## **Top Tip 74**

Don't let participants carry their tent poles inside their roll mats on the top of their rucksack. They get lost when they slide out as they cross stiles and when they bend down.

## **Top Tip 75**

If you have more than one team out at once copy their route cards on to different coloured paper so that you can see at a glance which team is which.

## Top Tip 76

As a Supervisor, make sure you give something back to the local community, buy fuel locally, pay car parking charges, eat locally and use local shops. Be sure that you are visitors that are welcomed back and not dreaded.

## Top Tip 77

If you are driving a minibus don't park it at the end of each leg on training walks, as participants stop learning to navigate and start learning just to walk to the minibus. Remember minibuses can be seen over the top of hedges and from long distances across fields.

## Top Tip 78

Make sure that all of the rucksacks are lined with heavy duty waterproof bags, no rucksack is waterproof. 20kg pet food bags are ideal as they are heavy duty and about the right size.

## Top Tip 79

Carry a small set of luggage scales so that you can ensure that the weight is distributed evenly amongst the team, and to ensure that no-one's rucksack is too heavy.

## Top Tip 80

On your training walks as you become more and more confident in the teams' abilities then let them do more and more of their walking unaccompanied to get them ready for the qualifying expedition.

## Top Tip 81

A group shelter is a great morale booster at lunch time if it is wet and cold, teams can shelter in this without getting any of their kit wet, and can warm up whilst they have lunch. Group shelters can be purchased or can be made from cut up old tents.

## Top Tip 82

Remember the environmental impact of everything that you do, our outdoor playground is someone else's home or workplace. Encourage young people to understand how shouting and noise can affect others.

E.g. How people may not want them sitting on their house wall to eat their lunch, how using a venue's facilities without paying for them damages the DofE's reputation.

## Top Tip 83

A pair of walking poles carried by the Leader or in their car can rescue an expedition if someone turns their ankle on rough ground. Often with the extra support of the walking poles participants can carry on walking.



## Top Tip 84

Route cards are young people's best guess at what they will achieve, timings should be flexible and young people should not be penalised if they are moving ahead or behind of their route card timings. However, remember that they should be achieving the minimum of six hours of planned activity at Bronze, seven hours at Silver and eight hours at Gold (at least half of which should be journeying). This does not include time for pitching and striking tents, launching canoes, or cooking in the evening, but it does include lunch.

Get teams to check their timings thoroughly on their practice so that there are no surprises on the qualifying expedition.

## Top Tip 85

Getting lost is a normal part of the expedition process, it is from learning how to deal with these problems that teams learn key navigational skills.

Don't be too quick to intervene and correct teams if they look as if they are getting it wrong.

## Top Tip 86

The hardest part of any expedition is walking off in the correct direction from the start point!

Ensure teams take time at the start to orientate themselves well.

## Top Tip 87

Teams usually fall out over small things, don't worry about this. Help them to see it is part of learning to work together as a team.

## Top Tip 90

Remote country lanes are tough on vehicles, make sure your spare wheel is fully inflated and you have the jack and wheel brace in case of a puncture.



## Top Tip 88

Make sure there is always more than one person navigating at any one time. It is never only one person's job, someone must always be backing them up. However, at times someone will need to make a decision and the team must be in agreement with this. Discuss with participants how they'll handle these tricky decisions.

## Top Tip 89

Some participants never really become completely fluent navigators, don't worry as long as most of the team are capable. Help them to focus on what other skills they can bring to the team. Are they the motivator, the joker keeping people's spirits up or the organiser?

Every team needs a mix of skills to function well; not everyone has to be expert at everything.

## Top Tip 91

Make sure you have a car charger for your phone and that you take every opportunity to make sure that it is fully charged, you never know when you might need it.

## Top Tip 92

Make sure your breakdown cover is up to date and that you can accurately give grid references if required, in case you need help.

## Top Tip 94

The Assessor should be welcomed as a part of your team. Work out with them where you are both going to meet the team so that the team don't get too many visits on each day.

## **Top Tip 96**

Things change!

Expect the unexpected and be ready to think on your feet and make changes to your plans many times throughout the expedition.

## **Top Tip 97**

You will have to be constantly assessing your dynamic risk assessment if the weather conditions change dramatically. Don't be afraid to call a halt to the expedition if the conditions demand it. The participants will be disappointed but there will always be another opportunity; better safe than sorry.

## **Top Tip 98**

Don't get stuck in a rut and go to the same place for expeditions that you have always gone. Find new places to explore.

## **Top Tip 99**

Never stop learning yourself, there is always something new to find out or discover. Keep challenging yourself and keep learning, and you will always inspire those working with you.

## **Top Tip 100**

Let young people make mistakes... then talk through solutions with them.



## Top Tip 101

**REMEMBER - MAKE IT FUN!**



